



The National Estuary Program was established in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. Unlike traditional regulatory approaches to environmental protection, the NEP targets a broad range of issues and engages local communities in the process. The program focuses not just on improving water quality in an estuary, but on maintaining the integrity of the whole system — its chemical, physical, and biological properties, as well as its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values.

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Fact Sheet/June 2002

Long Island Sound



What Makes Long Island Sound Special?

- Long Island Sound is an estuary, a place where salt water from the ocean mixes with fresh water from rivers and the land. Long Island Sound is unique in that it has two connections to the sea —The Race to the east and the East River to the west—and several major rivers.
- The Sound provides feeding, breeding, nesting, and nursery areas for a diversity of plant and animal life, and contributes an estimated \$5.5 billion per year to the regional economy from boating, commercial and sport fishing, swimming, and sight-seeing.

Why Does the Sound Need Special Attention?

- More than 8 million people live in the Long Island Sound watershed, and the associated development has increased some types of pollution, altered land surfaces, reduced open spaces, and restricted access to the Sound.
- Despite improvements over the past 30 years, serious problems remain, particularly hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen), which is caused by excessive nitrogen loading from sewage treatment plants and polluted runoff into the Sound, and the historic loss and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat.

What are the Long Term Goals?

- Meet CT and NY water quality standards for dissolved oxygen by 2014.
- Restore 2000 acres of tidal wetlands and other coastal habitats and 100 river miles of migratory fish habitat by 2008.

Progress/Goals for the Future

What Partnership Progress was Made in 2001?

- EPA approved the states' total maximum daily load (TMDL) for nitrogen discharges to the Sound, which establishes a 58.5% nitrogen reduction target for CT and NY sources, along with other actions needed to achieve water quality standards for dissolved oxygen by 2014.
- LISS partner agencies restored 27.5 acres of coastal habitat and 7.25 river miles of migratory fish habitat.
- CT established a nitrogen credit trading program and issued a state-wide general permit with nitrogen limits for all 79 sewage treatment plants.
- The LISS issued the *Sound Health 2001 Report*, which describes trends in the health and quality of water, habitats, and living resources of the Sound as measured by a wide range of indicators.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2002?

- The LISS will release *the 2002 Long Island Sound Agreement*, a broad vision for the restoration and protection of the Sound, with measurable environmental goals and priorities for continued work on the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP).
- CT will start the 1st year of a nitrogen effluent trading program to help meet its reduction target in a more cost-effective way.
- The LISS will continue to work with federal and state partners to refine nitrogen load reduction targets and strategies for MA, NH and VT sources.
- CT and NY will continue high priority habitat restoration projects.

Long Island Sound



Who are the Partners?

EPA New England • EPA Region II • EPA Long Island Sound Office • Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection • New York Department of Environmental Conservation • New York Department of State • New York City Department of Environmental Protection • USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service • New York Sea Grant • Connecticut Sea Grant • Long Island Sound Watershed Alliance • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • U.S. Geological Survey • University of Connecticut • University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System • SUNY Stony Brook • South Western Regional Planning Agency • Westchester County Department of Planning • New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission • Interstate Environment Commission

Background

► **Getting Resources:** With leadership from the Long Island Sound Congressional Caucus and support from local environmental groups and the public, Congress passed legislation in 1990 establishing the EPA Long Island Sound Office with its own funding authorization, through which more than \$10 million dollars have been appropriated to support the program. Connecticut and New York have already spent millions to upgrade sewage treatment plants, control polluted runoff, and restore habitat, and also have committed to spend hundreds of millions more to complete the job.

► **Making Plans:** In 1994, the LISS completed the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which describes the major problems affecting the health of the Sound's ecosystem and the actions necessary to solve them, outlines a "phased" plan for reducing nitrogen loads to the Sound, and recommends development of a regional habitat restoration strategy.

► **Setting Goals:** In 1998, the LISS reached historic agreements to reduce human-caused nitrogen loads to the Sound from CT and NY sources by 58.5% by the year 2014 and restore 2,000 acres and 100 river miles of natural habitat by 2008. Efforts to meet nitrogen reduction goals were further strengthened with the approval of the LIS TMDL in 2001.

► **Measuring Progress:** The LISS has provided funding for an ambient water quality monitoring program to measure changes in dissolved oxygen levels since 1987, and both states monitor sewage treatment plant effluent to measure changes in nitrogen loads to the Sound.

► **Getting Results:** Since 1990, nitrogen discharges from sewage treatment plants in CT and NY have been reduced by over 25%. Since setting habitat restoration targets in 1998, LISS partner agencies have restored 338 acres of coastal habitat and opened 39 miles of river for passage of anadromous fish.

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